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An update for members and partners of the new Marine Recreational Information Program

MARCH 2008

IN THIS UPDATE:

- **Meeting Stresses Uniqueness of Pacific Islands Fishing**
- **Guidance on National Angler Registry Nearing Release**
- **Advisory Committee Being Considered**
- **Upcoming Events**

FULL STORIES:

Meeting Stresses Uniqueness of Pacific Islands Fishing

Last month, the MRIP initiative team leads traveled to Honolulu, Hawaii for the first of several regional listening sessions. The trip was a valuable opportunity to listen and learn from the Agency's science and management partners about the Pacific Island Region's specific data and management needs.

The centerpiece of the visit was a one-day workshop hosted by the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council. The purpose of the workshop was to gather information that can be used to develop a regional plan for recreational fishing data collection. Specifically, the meetings focused on answering four fundamental questions:

1. What is the adequacy of the coverage of the current surveys in the Pacific Islands?
2. What changes in the geographic, seasonal or other elements of coverage are needed?
3. What are the specific needs for recreational survey-based catch and effort data for stock assessment and management?
4. What changes in survey scope and coverage are needed to produce data that addresses those needs?

Interests were well represented at the workshop and included staff from the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council, NOAA Fisheries Pacific Islands Regional Office and Science Center, State of Hawaii, along with representatives from American Samoa, Guam, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

As a follow-up to the regional listening session, Dr. John Boreman, Executive Steering Committee chairman, will accompany Council Executive Director and ESC member Kitty Simonds to the Western Pacific Fishery Management Council meeting in Guam and Saipan from March 17-21.

The next regional listening session will take place in St. Pete, Florida from March 17-19.

Guidance on National Registry Nearing Release

The proposed rule on the national saltwater angler registry is on schedule to be released by early summer. A proposed rule is a public document announcing significant government plans and offering opportunity for public input, usually for 30 days or more. In this case, the proposed rule will

define the scope of the angler registry and include specific information about minimum data requirements and acceptable state fishing license exemptions.

The registry, a mandate in the reauthorized Magnuson Stevens Act, will help improve data collection by creating a universe of saltwater anglers—essentially a "phonebook" of fishermen that is updated each year. This resource will help reduce bias and improve the efficiency of catch and effort surveys. It also will give saltwater anglers better representation in the policy-making process.

Advisory Committee Being Considered

NOAA is considering creating an advisory committee of experts to provide oversight of the new Marine Recreational Information Program. The National Research Council's 2006 review of the data collection program recommended establishment of a "permanent and independent research group...to continuously evaluate the statistical design and adequacy of recreational fishery surveys and to guide necessary modifications or new initiatives." According to the Federal Advisory Committee Act (or FACA), advisory committees must meet strict requirements to ensure the advice provided is objective and open to the public. We will keep you informed as the proposal moves ahead.

Upcoming Events

Members of the Executive Steering Committee, teams, and work groups are hitting the road each month to brief partners and constituents about the Marine Recreational Information Program initiative. Below are only a few of the meetings and events.

March Events

Fred Hall Fishing Tackle and Boat Show
Somerset Saltwater Fishing Expo
Southeast Region Listening Session
Western Pacific Council Meeting
North American Fish & Wildlife Conference
Cape Cod Salties Sportfishing Club

April Events

Northeast Region Listening Session
New England Saltwater Sportfishing Show
Northeast Fish and Wildlife Conference
NOAA Day at the Docks
National Casting Call
American Boating Congress

Click <http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/mrii/index.html> for a complete schedule of upcoming briefings. If you're interested in inviting a representative of the initiative to provide a briefing to your organization, please contact Forbes Darby.

Newscast updates are e-mailed monthly to NOAA Fisheries, state natural resource agencies, marine fisheries commissions, fishery management councils and members of the sportfishing community with an interest in the initiative to improve saltwater recreational fishing information. For more information, contact Forbes Darby at forbes.darby@noaa.gov or by phone at (301) 713-9501.